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## A Study Aiming To Develop Listening Skills Of Elementary Second Grade Students

Selma Gulec <sup>a\*</sup>, Nazli Durmus <sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> Education Faculty, Uludag University, 16059, Bursa, Turkey<sup>b</sup> Classroom Teachers, Şehit Murat Atsen Primary School, Osmangazi, Bursa, Turkey

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### Abstract

In this experimental study made with elementary second grade students, it was investigated into the effects of practices employed via the use of various methods and techniques with the aim of developing listening skills using children's literature products. The study was planned as a one-group experimental study with a pre-test and post-test measurement within a twelve-week period of time. Within the scope of the study, the "Listening Skill Evaluation Form" was used as a pre-test and post-test measurement tool and various methods and techniques aiming to develop listening skills with using children's literature products were used during the practices which lasted ten weeks. The study included a total of 23 students, 15 female and 8 male. Class 2C determined as the study group was given two hours per week of listening training which lasted twelve weeks. At the end of the listening training given, noticeable development was observed in the listening skills of the students. Moreover, as a result of the study, the difference between the pre-test and post-test achievement scores was found to be statistically significant. The result obtained from the study indicated that the practices performed with using various methods and techniques employed with the aim of developing listening skills via using children's literature products developed the elementary second grade students' listening skills. Moreover, the findings obtained during the study revealed that appropriate children's literature texts affect the development of children's listening skills in a positive way.

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### 1. Introduction

Language is an enchanting entity, so multi-directional that we cannot consider in an instant, with many different

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\* Selma Güleç, 00902242942292

E-mail address: [sgulec@uludag.edu.tr](mailto:sgulec@uludag.edu.tr)

qualities appearing when we take from various perspectives and also with some secrets which we cannot crack today. It is an institution having to do with and at the same time composing both humans and society and all areas such as science, art, technique, which cannot be thought separately from both humans and society (Aksan, 2000: 11). Language is the most common and powerful means achieving agreement between people. This means is used in almost all areas of life to understand and express various thoughts, emotions, attitudes, beliefs, value judgments; transfer information, cultural accumulation related to events lived (Ozbay, 2008: 1,2). What underlies interpersonal relationships is communication. We communicate in order to learn, teach, understand, express, influence, go under influence, share and possess. Apart from these, we try to meet our basic physiological needs such as eating, drinking and having shelter and safety needs by establishing communication as well. Undoubtedly, communication is very important for humans and all the other social systems, but especially today communication is of great importance more than ever. The reason why the importance of communication has increased today is that communication is the basic tool of information communication which is a source of power today. It becomes possible through communication that information having lent its name to our age appears as a value and is transferred (Tutar and Yılmaz, 2002: 13). When the communication process is looked from language perspective, it is seen that a sender may send a message by either speaking or writing; a receiver may receive a message by either listening or reading. In this case, the sender must have a command of verbal or written expression skills; the receiver must have a command of skills of understanding what is listened or spoken. For this reason, all individuals in a society must have a command of verbal and written expression skills and those of understanding what is listened and spoken. Otherwise, it is not possible to mention a healthy communication (Yangın, 1999: 2). We achieve the exchange of information which we call communication by means of four basic skills of our mother tongue, which are classified as listening, speaking, reading and writing (Topbaş et al., 1998: 12).

### *1.1. Listening Skill*

Listening is the ability to fully understand a message which a speaking or a loudly reading person desire to give. Listening is an important part of communication and education process (Ozbay, 2008: 5). According to Güneş (2007: 74), listening is not only done in order to set up communication, but at the same time it develops learning, understanding and mental skills. According to this, listening is not just the process of hearing sounds correctly. Listening is the whole of mental activities realized in order to understand what is heard. That is to say, listening means making choices from among what is heard, organizing them, integrating what is transferred by the speaker with background knowledge and structuring them mentally. Listening in educational communication includes carefully following and perceiving messages sent by the speaker to the listener and making sense of them by retrieving relevant experiences from the memory. Since most of the teaching is based on verbal explanation, being competent at listening on its own is a communication skill for both the teacher and the student (Başaran, 2005: 433). In order to both set up healthy communication and achieve efficient learning, it is necessary to know how to listen. Listening is not only understanding, getting informed and appreciating, but it is also an etiquette. Both in daily life and working life and social life, establishing a healthy and good environment depends on the presence of people knowing how to listen (Koç, Müftüoğlu et al., 1998: 55). Listening training starting at early ages is a process composing all learning periods of an individual. Listening habit which a student acquire during preschool and elementary school years should be enhanced more via help of new information to be given and new practices to be done at high school level and a good listening habit should be one of his/her distinct personality characteristics (Yılmaz, 2007: 50). For listening works at school to be useful, there are some prerequisites to be fulfilled. These are readiness level, attention and teacher guidance. Before starting a lesson, especially students should be made ready to listen. Each teacher can do this with a particular style (a question or an anecdote related to subject, etc.). Drawing students' attention to the lesson, subject is the prerequisite for a good listening. It is difficult for a student with distracted attention to understand what he/she listens. Students' seeing a person or material they listen, the presence of silence in the environment and, most important of all, teachers' being guides by being good listeners are indispensable prerequisites of listening training (Umagan, 2007: 155). In the development of listening skills, students should get benefited from audio-visual aids such as computer, television, radio, stereo, CD player, etc. Especially in reading-listening works, a listening training in a different method may be realized by having students listen to poems, stories, tales, fables, etc. or texts from audio aids or watch them visually.

Moreover, one of the methods most frequently used in listening training is drama. Drama on its own is an educational area developing and training a child and at the same time an effective method developing creativity (Bayram et al., 2004: 7). Dictation works are among the activities to be done with the aim of developing students' listening skills. Students are supposed to listen in dictation works. Reading a text to be dictated by dividing into appropriate lengths and repeating parts read will help students to focus their attention (Kocaadam, 2011: 15). During listening, students should picture what they listen in their minds by using their imagination as well. Many stories include rich detail and descriptive expressions. Children should create mental images by thinking over these and, after listening, be able to put them into paper as well (Yılmaz, 2007: 59). In developing students' listening skills, story maps should be benefited. A story map includes diagrams in which characters and concepts of event, time and place in a story are associated with one another. A story map prepared beforehand is distributed to students after having them listen to the story and they are asked to fill in this diagram. Hence, both students can be helped to develop their listening skills and permanent learning can be achieved.

## 1.2. Children's Literature

According to Şirin (2007: 16), children's literature is a kind of transition period literature whose basic source is child and childhood, appropriate for the child's perception, interest, attention, emotion, thought and imaginary world, reflecting child's view and child's reality, achieving contents appropriate for children simply and sincerely in prosody, language, thought and types, not only having children acquire the habit of reading but also contributing to children's development in terms of literature, art and esthetics, and preparing children for adulthood in a sensitive way. Although childhood is regarded as a short period in person's life, it is a period whose effects cannot be disregarded. Experts studying on language development suggest that childhood period in a person's life is a very important period of time for language development. In an individual's language development, such factors as individuals with whom he or she is in communication (family-friends), social environment and experience richness are very important. Differences and richness of these factors affect language development greatly and positively. In this respect, children's literature is very effective on children's language development. Children should be introduced nicely prepared children's literature works at preschool stage and elementary first stage (Demir, 2009: 11). Children's literature works enrich and develop children's imaginary world. By means of these works, the child discovers other worlds and learn about details of his or her language. For this reason, at every stage of the development of listening skill, children should be made to meet children's literature products. In this respect, the purpose of this study is to determine that elementary 2nd grade students' listening skills can be developed through listening trainings done via using children's literature products and make some suggestions by starting from data to be obtained. The statement "Do various methods and techniques used in the development of listening skills by using children's literature products have any effects on the development of elementary 2nd grade students' listening skills?" is the main problem of this study. In the analysis of the main problem of the study, the following sub-problems were benefited:

1. Is there a significant difference between the elementary 2nd grade students' listening skills pre-test and post-test achievement scores?
2. Do the distributions of the student achievement levels in the listening trainings done via using children's literature products show any differences?

## 2. Method

The model of the study is a single-group pre-test post-test experimental group. In the single- group pre-test post-test model, there is a randomly selected group. This group is administered both pre-experimental (pre-test) and post-experimental (post-test) measurements (Karasar, 2010: 96). The study group is composed of a total of 23 (15 female and 8 male) students enrolled in 2-C class of Şehit Murat Atsen Elementary School. Moreover, of the students composing the study group, 13 received a year of preschool education, whereas 10 did not go to a nursery school. The study group is the researcher's own class where she is the classroom teacher. In this study, as a pre-test and post-test, "Listening Skill Evaluation Form" was used. In many previous studies, pre-test and post-test

measurements were made via written examinations and changes in students' listening comprehension levels were tried to be determined via their achievement scores in written examinations. In this study, however, since the students composing the study group were 2nd graders, the behaviors related to preparation for listening, applying listening rules and listening comprehension were observed in one-to-one manner and the listening skill was tried to be evaluated as a whole. In the study, the "Listening Skill Evaluation Form" used as the pre-test and post-test measures was taken from the "Elementary Turkish 2 Teacher's Guidebook" prepared by Serdar Arhan and Seçil Coşkun. In the study, from children's literature products, anecdotes, shadow plays, fairy tales, fables, stories, poems, memoirs, nursery rhymes and riddles and an informative listening text were used. The informative listening text entitled "Mother Earth" used in the pre-test and post-test administrations and prepared by Serdar Arhan was taken from the Turkish 2nd grade teacher's guidebook. A Karagöz and Hacivat shadow play, a Nasrettin Hoca anecdote, nursery rhymes and riddles, of Grimm's fairy tales, "The Elves and the Shoemaker", "The Wolf and Seven Young Goats" and "The Pied Piper of Hamelin", of Andersen's fairy tales, "Real Princess", of Ezop's fables, "The Fox Without a Tail", the memoir entitled "Atatürk Loved Children Very Much" penned by Avni Altın, the story entitled "Açelya's One Very Long Day" penned by Sevim Ak, and poems such "Butterfly" written by Hasan Ali Yücel and "Atatürk Was Once a Child" written by Aziz Sivaslıoğlu were used in the administrations on the ground that they were considered to meet the criteria of the children's literature.

### *2.1. Data Collection and Analysis*

The 2-C class determined as the study group was administered a listening work of 2 hours a week which lasted 12 weeks and, at the end of this administration, evaluation works were administered with the aim of measuring listening comprehension skills. And the pre-test and post-test measurements administered in the first and the last weeks were determined according to the criteria in the "Listening Skill Evaluation Form". In the "Listening Skill Evaluation Form" used to determine the students' pre-test and post-test measures, there are 13 behaviors (acquisitions) related to listening. In this form, each behavior was evaluated over (4) points. (4) point indicates that the behavior is above the desired level, (3) point shows that the behavior is at the expected level but imperfect, (2) point means that the behavior is close to the expected level but with many mistakes, and (1) point indicates that the behavior is far below the expected level. The scores obtained from evaluation activities performed with the children's literature products used in the administrations to determine the development levels of students' listening skills were evaluated over (5). According to this, the score interval of 85–100 was accepted as (5/Very good), the score interval of 70–84 as (4/Good), the score interval of 55–69 as (3/Average), the score interval of 45–54 as (2/Pass), and the score interval of 0–44 as (1/Fail). The significance level was accepted as .05 in the statistical analyses used in the study. The statistical analyses of the data collected within the scope of the study were made via using the SPSS 15.0 (Statistic Package For Social Science) program.

## **3. Findings and Interpretations**

The findings obtained as a result of the statistical analyses of the data collected for the analyses of the problems discussed in the study and the interpretations of these findings are given below:

### *3.1. Comparison of the Students' Listening Skills Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores*

The actual aim of the study is to inquire into if various methods and techniques used to develop listening skills via using children's literature products have any effects on the development of elementary 2nd grade students' listening skills. To find an answer to this problem of the study, whether there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test achievement scores of the students composing the study group was analyzed via using the "matched sampling t-test". The analysis results were given in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Listening Skills Pre-Test and Post-Test Measurements

	Number of Subjects (n)	Arithmetic Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Standard Deviation (s)	Degree of Freedom (sd)	"t" Value (t)	Significance Level (p)
PRE-TEST	23	2,72	0,91			
POST-TEST	23	3,00	0,73	22	4,235	,000

In Table 1, the pre-test and post-test achievement scores of the students composing the study group are seen. According to this data, the mean of the scores obtained by the students from the pre-test measurements in relation to listening skills is 2,72; the standard deviation is 0,91. The mean of the scores obtained by the students from the post-test measurements made following the administrations is 3,00; the standard deviation is 0,73. According to the pre-test and post-test measurements, the value of 4,235 obtained via the t-test made between the two group means is bigger than the t table value according to the significance level of .05 ( $t_{(22)} = 4,235$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that there is a significant difference between the students' pre-test and the post-test measurement levels. Moreover, it is seen in the table that this difference is in favor of the post-test scores.

As a result, when the t-test results and the means belonging to the groups were evaluated together, it was concluded that various methods and techniques used with the children's literature products in the development of listening skills had effect on the development of elementary 2nd grade students' listening skills. With the help of the listening trainings performed with children's literature products, the students' listening skills developed at a rate of 10,3%.

### 3.2. Student Achievement Levels in the Listening Trainings Performed with Children's Literature Products

Since one of the aims of the study was to reveal the effect of children's literature products on the development of children's listening skills, some activities were performed with using various children's literature products with the aim of developing the students' listening skills during 9 weeks remaining after the weeks in which the pre-test and post-test measurements were made and the rules in regard to how listening would be performed were given. After the listening works, the students were administered various evaluation techniques related to the texts and the students' achievement levels were examined. The frequencies and percentages related to the achievement levels in the children's literature products used in the development of the students' listening skills were determined and given in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Student Achievement Levels in Listening Trainings Done via Children's Literature Products

	5		4		3		2		1	
	VERY GOOD		GOOD		AVERAGE		PASS		FAIL	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
FABLE "The Wolf and Seven Young Goats"	10	43,5	9	39,1	1	4,3	-	-	3	13
POEM "Butterfly"	21	91,3	1	4,3	1	4,3	-	-	-	-
FAIRY TALE "Real Princess"	9	39,1	4	17,4	5	21,7	3	13	2	8,7
Nursery Rhyme, Riddle and Anecdote	11	47,8	9	39,1	2	8,7	-	-	1	4,3

FABLE "The Fox Without a Tail"	17	73,9	4	17,4	1	4,3	-	-	1	4,3
Karagöz-Hacivat Shadow Play	18	78,3	4	17,4	-	-	1	4,3	-	-
MEMOIR "Atatürk Loved Children Very Much"	8	34,8	4	17,4	7	30,4	3	13	1	4,3
FAIRY TALE "The Pied Piper of Hamelin"	8	34,8	6	26,1	3	13	2	8,7	4	17,4
STORY "Açelya's One Very Long Day"	5	21,7	7	30,4	6	26,1	3	13	2	8,7

According to Table 2, when the achievement levels in the children's literature products used in the development of the students' listening skills were examined, it was determined in general that almost all the students were successful at the children's literature product types of fable, poem, Karagöz-Hacivat shadow play, nursery rhyme, riddle and anecdote by taking the scores of (5/Very Good) and (4/Good); nearly half of the class were successful at the types of fairy tale, memoir and story by taking the scores of (5/Very Good) and (4/Good). From all these findings, it can be stated that while high level of success was achieved when the students actively participated and in the short texts, success level decreased a bit in longer texts.

#### 4. Results

1- The effects of children's literature products on the development of listening skills and the importance of the use of these products as a means of development of children's listening skills were once put forward via this study.

2- It was observed that the activities performed with using children's literature products to develop students' listening skills yielded positive results. As a result of these activities, the students' listening skills increased at a significant rate of 10,3% within a short period of time of 3 months. Both the student's listening behaviors and skills such as comprehending what they listen, reaching various judgments starting from what they listen and relate what they listen to what they already know. Starting from here, the conclusion that students' listening skills can be developed via the help of listening activities performed regularly was reached. This finding is supported by the studies made by Doğan (2007), Yılmaz (2007) and Yıldırım (2007) as well. In these studies, too, the conclusion that the trainings given in relation to listening skills developed students' listening skills was reached.

3- It was observed that there was a significant difference between the achievement scores obtained from the pre-test measurement made prior to the administrations and those obtained from the post-test measurement made following the administrations. The students' post-test achievement score were higher than their pre-test achievement scores. The listening training given to the students differentiated the students' achievement levels significantly. It can be stated that the children's literature products used had a high effect on this difference observed in the students' listening achievement levels.

4- During the administrations, the students participated in lessons actively. Especially, it was observed that the students found pleasure in such activities as competition, play, impersonation and drama and were very eager to participate in these activities. Moreover, the results of the study made by Mustafa Yazkan in 2000, too, revealed that the method of dramatization used in the acquisition of listening comprehension behaviors was more successful and the method of dramatization facilitated the students' comprehension.

5- It was observed that the students liked such children's literature product types as Karagöz-Hacivat shadow play, poem, fable, nursery rhymes, riddles and anecdote much more. In the evaluation works made following the administrations, it was determined that the students were much more successful at short texts, but their achievement levels decreased a bit in longer texts.

#### 5. Suggestions

1- The fact that the listening skill is a skill which can be developed and measured should be accepted by all teachers and activities should be carried out in this direction.



2- All teachers, mainly classroom teachers and Turkish teachers, should spend effort to have students acquire and develop listening skills. To achieve this, teachers should be able to carry out regular and planned activities aiming to develop students' listening skills.

3- At elementary first grade, the training of listening, one of four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), should be given priority and students should be made to acquire basic habits related to listening-comprehension starting from this grade. Moreover, at the other grade levels, too, listening training should be continued by attaching the same importance and children's literature products (memoirs, stories, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, riddles, poems, legends, myths, etc.) and various methods and techniques appropriate for listening training (play, impersonation, dictation, drama, competition, etc.) should be used to have students to acquire this skill.

4- Starting from individual differences among children, teachers may fill in observation forms including basic criteria related to listening skills for each student within educational year and, starting from these observation forms, determine students remaining below class level and plan separate works for these students.

5- All teachers, mainly classroom teachers and Turkish teachers, should be equipped with necessary knowledge and skills related to the matter of having students acquire listening skills. To achieve this, it may be appropriate to raise the awareness of teachers via in-service trainings about the importance of listening skills, how to apply methods and techniques of developing listening skills and on what texts to study when developing this skill.

6- Teachers should have a command of the area of children's literature and follow symposia, panels, meetings and periodicals related to this field. Moreover, in-service trainings should be organized by the Ministry of National Education on children's literature and teachers should be made to participate in these trainings. In this way, teachers may have children meet appropriate literary texts and choose children's literature products appropriate for their interest and needs.

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